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BRIEF

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REVIEW

OF

“STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLES,” &c.

ISSUED BY A

COMMITTEE OF THE UNITED ASSOCIATE SYNOD,

IN REFERENCE TO

CERTAIN DOCTRINES DISCUSSED IN SYNOD,

JUNE, 1841.

BY

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P R E F A C E.

THE appearance of the following strictures cannot reasonably surprise any one. The Committee have either mistaken or transgressed their commission. The Synod at their last meeting gave no judgment on *any one* of the points of doctrine which the Committee's document combats, and the Committee had no means of knowing the judgment of the Synod in the matter. As it was in these circumstances that the Committee were appointed to give a "Statement of Principles held by the United Associate Synod," or, in other words, "to prepare a statement of the sentiments of the Synod, on the important matters of doctrine referred to in the proceedings of this meeting of Synod;" this appointment means, and cannot but mean, that they were to draw up a clear statement resting on the basis of *certain and received principles*, which are the known and recognised sentiments of the Secession Church on the various topics in question. But, instead of giving this digest of principles, the Committee have chosen to compose a controversial pamphlet. They have not exhibited the known principles of the body, but have caused the Synod to descend into the arena of debate with a single individual. Moreover, though their appointment as a Committee has the sanction of the Synod, their pamphlet has not. Had it been prepared with a view to be laid before the next meeting of Synod for its adoption, previous to it being printed and published, it would have been unfair to have published strictures upon it; but as this has not been done, and as it is published without authority, no one can say whether the sanction of the Synod is to be sought for it or not. If, after all, the sanction of the Synod is to be sought, this renders it imperative on every member, or at least proper, to canvass its merits in the same open and public form, that the truth may be elicited and established, and

come to prevail in the anticipated deliberations. An honest man feels no other fair course left open to him, and truth demands that he take this course. If, on the other hand, the sanction of the Synod is not to be sought, then the document, however anomalous in its character, sinks to the level of the private opinions of the men who composed it, and is as liable to controversy as the production of any unappointed individual. Hence, no competent judge will suppose that I am infringing any one ecclesiastical canon in publishing my review of the "Statement." All candour and fairness reclaim against any such supposition. What I have written will tell the reader what I think of it. I consider it altogether one of the most objectionable and least satisfactory things it was ever my fortune to peruse. I regret that my review, such as it is, has been so long of appearing. It was written about three months ago—almost immediately after I read the "Statement"—but circumstances which need not be specified, have occasioned the delay of its publication. As it is, I commit it to God's care, and the perusal and prayers of His people.

BATHGATE, 26th January, 1842.

REVIEW

OF

‘STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLES,’ &c.

I READ this pamphlet with great care, and I finished it with great disappointment. I was disappointed in it assuming the undignified form of an attack upon a single individual, instead of a lucid statement which would establish the truth on all sides. I was also disappointed in that the respectable list of names, which seemed a reasonable guarantee for something satisfactory, is, after all, associated with what I cannot consider as anything else but the very reverse. In such circumstances, one does not like to speak out what he thinks, yet I cannot resist the conclusion that the writers of the statement do not understand their own minds or the subject they profess to discuss, and that most certainly they do not understand the mind of the person whom they were appointed to write against. They have entirely missed the simplicity of his views, and, spending themselves in hunting for them in complicated abstractions, they have failed entirely to apprehend his meaning. I cannot but feel persuaded that if they would once allow the supposition, *he may, after all, be right*, and take the leisure to understand thoroughly what he means, and then clearly understand what they mean themselves, they would experience the lot of Noah's dove, and find no rest to the soles of their feet till they returned to the ark of truth. I beg, in all humility, to urge upon them to re-consider the subject; and if they do so closely and candidly, and only *think out* what they themselves allow, they will really find these two things true—his views are correct, and they are fairly derivable from their own admissions. It is to the latter point, however, that I now propose to direct attention.

The first thing I have to say is, that if the Committee would only clear up their own thoughts on the subject, they fully teach the doctrine of a full universal atonement. They say "it has uniformly been the doctrine of the Secession Church"—"that there is an intrinsic sufficiency in the atonement of Christ for the salvation of all men, and that it so removes all legal obstructions to their salvation, as that the door of mercy is open to them, and that, in consistency with his holy character, law, and government, God presents to them all salvation as a gift, to be accepted by faith." They indicate, too, very clearly, why the removal of these "obstructions" was needed. "The infinite hatred of the Holy One to sin, the honour of his law and justice in condemning it, and the sanctity of his moral administration, demanded such a sacrifice, in order that any of our race should be saved; and the honour of God in all these views is thus provided for, in presenting salvation as a gift to all men." And they very clearly state the extent to which the work reaches, by this quotation, "The Lord Jesus Christ, in the glorious constitution of his person as God-man, *Emmanuel*, *God with us*, doth stand in an equal, and undistinguished relation of a kinsman-Redeemer to mankind sinners *as such*; his mediatory offices, in the true and glorious nature thereof, do stand in an equal and undistinguished relation and suitableness to the case and need of mankind sinners *as such*; the atonement and righteousness of Christ, are, in themselves, of a justice-satisfying and law-magnifying nature, containing the utmost of what law and justice can require for repairing the whole breach of the covenant of works, and fulfilling the same, in order to the justification of mankind sinners *as such*, who are warranted to betake themselves thereto by faith." Now, without stopping to turn attention to the several important admissions that are made in these passages, and which clearly convey in them the universality of a perfect atonement, I shall at present confine my attention to one point. Speaking of all men, it is said, the atonement of Christ "has so removed all legal obstructions to their salvation, as that the door of mercy is open to them;" and all this while "the infinite hatred of the Holy One to sin, the honour of his law and justice in condemning it, and the sanctity of his moral administration, demanded such a sacrifice, in order that any of our race should be saved." Let us, therefore, clearly understand what these "legal obstructions" are, which the atonement of Christ has removed. These "obstructions," be what they may, were the only things that rendered the sacrifice of Christ necessary, to honour God's holy hatred of sin, and the perfect principles of his moral government. Now, what are these "obstructions"? They consist solely of the sins of

men, and the legal claims of justice on account of these sins. No other "obstructions" are even conceivable to the salvation of any man. Now the Committee tell us, that "it has been uniformly the doctrine of the Secession Church," that the atonement of Christ, who "doth stand in an equal and undistinguished relation to *mankind sinners as such*," has perfectly "removed all these legal obstructions" to the salvation of all men. Thus they plainly teach us, that all the "obstructions" to salvation—the sins of all men and the legal claims of justice on account of these sins—Christ "hath put away by the sacrifice of himself." In other words, we are told by the Committee that the atonement of Christ, "which is of a justice-satisfying and law-magnifying nature, containing the utmost that law and justice can require for repairing the whole breach of the covenant of works," was for all men,—"*for mankind sinners as such*,"—and, consequently, that the "obstructions" to the salvation of all men are removed by Christ making an expiation for their sins. Indeed, without this in the case of every man, no legal "obstructions" whatever to his salvation could be removed, and with this, all legal "obstructions" are perfectly removed. The atonement for all men, too, on the principles of the Committee and "the uniform doctrine of the Secession Church," must be a complete atonement. The mind of man cannot even conceive of a half atonement in any one point of view. We feel intuitively that it is either complete for a man or it is nothing to him. Less than a complete atonement could "remove no legal obstruction" from before any human being,—*could remove no "obstruction" at all*. And, therefore, if it were not a complete atonement for all, expiating all their sins, satisfying the legal claims of justice against them on account of these sins, it has not and *cannot have*, removed *any* "legal obstruction to their salvation," or "opened *any* door of mercy" to them at all.

No thinking mind can resist coming to this conclusion, unless it is arrested before it reaches the meaning of its own words, by the figurative expressions it employs. It may use such *dainty* language as "*general relations*," and thus "bring forth butter in a lordly dish," and be so occupied with the *daintiness* of the word, and the *lordliness* of the dish, as to overlook the matter that they convey; but if the mind extricate itself from figures and phrases and get on to meaning, it will reach the conclusion of its own accord. When the mind attends to the literal operations from which the language is borrowed, it sees that it is quite possible to remove a stumbling-block which is lying in the way to a temple, and to throw open the doors of the temple so that all who choose may walk along the way unobstructed and enter in

by the doors, yea, to do all this without any special reckoning of the parties to be benefited by it. It is quite possible, indeed, for men to be so thoughtless as to remove the stumbling-stone and set open the doors, without any reference to individuals at all. A figure of this kind seems to play before the fancy and obstruct the mental discernment of some persons, when they apply similar phrases to the atoning work of Christ. But to stop here is obviously *to resist* the meaning of the subject. We see that a good and a wise man, in removing the stumbling-block out of the way to the temple and throwing open the temple doors, would intend it for the good of all the population *generally*, and for their good *equally*, provided they were all equally dependent upon it; and we see accordingly, that even according to the figure, as all men are equally dependent upon the atonement of Christ, "removing all legal obstructions to their salvation, and opening the door of mercy to them," so it must have been the gracious intention of the Supreme Ruler himself to include them all, and include them all equally in the benefit of the removal of these. That it was either this or nothing to the great mass of human beings, is further evident from the disparity as well as the resemblance of the cases. While the stumbling-block might be removed and the temple doors thrown open, without any direct reference to any body, the "obstructions" in the way to God cannot be removed from before a sinner and the door of mercy opened to him, without a direct reference to him in the work. The "obstructions" in the way of a sinner are all of his own creation, and laid in the way by himself. He has shut the door of mercy against himself with his own hands, and bars it by his own deeds. He has done both just by the commission of sins. And hence it follows, that there is no possible method of "removing all the legal obstructions to his salvation," and of "opening the door of mercy" to him, but by a propitiation being made for *his* sins. Thus, the doctrine which we have seen is contained in the statement of the Committee, cannot be avoided by a rational mind, if it only use the figurative language in the way of passing from the sign to the thing signified. It was when Christ "appeared once in the end of the world to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself," and thus "made reconciliation for iniquity," that he removed the "obstructions" of men's sin, and of the legal claims of justice against them on account of their sin; and as in doing this for all men, "he so removed all legal obstructions to their salvation, as to open the door of mercy to them," so he has necessarily "been made sin" for *them*, and given a perfect satisfaction for the sins of *all men*. In any other view than this, the whole would be a solemn hoax played off upon the mi-

sery of our species. Surely no one will allege that the expiation of the sins of *one* party, "removes all legal obstructions to the salvation" of *other* parties! or that there is such a thing in the work of Christ as a *whole* propitiation for some, and a *half* propitiation for others! "*General relations*" of this kind would be *dainties* indeed, but unfit for ordinary diet.

Assuming it now as true and what the statement of the Committee bears, that Christ in his death made expiation for the sins of all men, as he "removed" *them*, the *only* "obstructions" to the salvation of all men, the Committee should, of their own accord, recede from this proposition,—"*the Son of God as mediator, sustained a special relation to his own people, which he does not sustain to the rest of the world.*" In speaking of Christ "*as mediator*," do they refer to the other high characters he sustains, besides that of a pledged *atoning sacrifice*, such as the constituted executor of all the divine purposes of grace? They would need to know whether they refer to such characters as these, according to the saying of the Baptist, "the Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hands;" for if they do, they must see it is irrelevant to introduce them into the question of the extent of the atonement, as whatever view is taken of *this*, these characters are all admitted. If they do mean to fix our attention upon those other high characters, as they really seem to do in the texts they refer to, and intend merely to teach us that Christ as the bridegroom sustains a special relation to the bride different from what he sustains to the hosts of enemies around, (which is all that the texts imply) then they should recede from the notion that Christ in the precise aspect of a propitiatory sacrifice, is proven to have "sustained a special relation to his own people" in the eternal counsels, (as I suppose they mean,) since they have not hesitated to aver that he "*sustains general relations*" to all the extent of "removing all legal obstructions," arising from the sins of all men, and the legal claims of justice against them on account of their sins; and thus, "standing in an equal and undistinguished relation to mankind sinners *as such*," he has "opened the door of mercy" to all men, by expiating their sins. It is clear, as they will not cancel "*the general relations*," and the "removal of all legal obstructions," they ought to expunge this proposition of a specialty in doing so, and come out on the unhampered view of the unlimited and equal atonement. They cannot hang in mid-air between the positions, that the atonement was either *wholly* for the elect, or *equally* for all. I am sure their own minds feel it impossible to understand how an atoning sacrifice which accomplished enough for all, could be, *of itself*, more specially related to one than to another, as if it were, after all, less than

enough for the one, or more than enough for the other! The atonement was the *perfect removal* of "the obstructions" of sin, and the legal claims against the sinner. This too is all that *it is or can be* in itself. The Committee know this, and admit its unlimited expiatory efficiency. How then can they say that Christ, in engaging to make this atonement, does, in this precise aspect of the case, sustain any special relation to one party more than another? They admit that he did the work eventually for *all*, so far as the removal of obstacles by expiation is concerned; and he must have foreseen and intended this. It is vain and most inaccurate to allow the mind to stray away from the precise point in hand, and unite application with propitiation. All men allow entirely special relations in the matter of application. But the first thing that wisdom demands in a great work of grace like redemption, is to see that a solid and honourable ground be laid, on which purposes may proceed in the way of gracious application. In all wisdom and prudence *THAT must* take precedence in God's holy contemplations in the august concerns of man's salvation. In this fundamental part we know of no restrictions. But as to the purposes and plans of application which proceed upon the contemplation of this holy ground already laid, these were no doubt all in Christ's view, and all equally lodged in Christ's hand. But whatever relations he sustained to those who were now contemplated as to be the subjects of special application, these have plainly nothing whatever to do with the anterior relation to the law of God on the one hand, and the fallen race on the other, in which he stood as the great atoning sacrifice, or the near kinsman who was "to make his soul an offering for sin." As this offering is admitted by the Committee, and admitted as what "has been uniformly the doctrine of the Secession Church," to be "of a justice-satisfying and law-magnifying nature, repairing the *whole* breach of the covenant of works, for mankind sinners *as such*," or in other words, effectual for the "removing of all legal obstructions" arising from the sin of all men, and the legal claims of justice on account of sin, then it is the harmonious belief of us all, that in standing the great pledged sin-offering for the sins of the world, he could not "sustain any special relation" to those who were ultimately to become his own people, which as a propitiation he did not sustain to the rest of the world. It is in his other character only, that this special relation obtains.

If the Committee only *think out* the principle which we have seen they admit, they must depart from holding that "*in making the atonement by his death, Christ bore a special relation to his own chosen people.*" That there was a special relation consequent upon his death contemplated in the

divine mind, but springing not from the death itself, but from the sovereign choice of God, is admitted on all hands. But this is a very different thing from standing in a special relation to them in making the atonement; and this difference is a matter of vast practical moment in the day of conversion. Were there, in the making of the atonement any special relation, how could the anxious sinner ever get peace? But to drop at present the all-important practical bearings of the subject, it will surely be admitted, after what has been deduced from the statements of the Committee, that the atonement by Christ's death was a complete expiation for sin—for all sin—for the sin of all men. It is the doctrine of the committee, and "has been uniformly the doctrine of the Secession Church," that, by his death, Christ has "removed all legal obstructions to the salvation" of all men, and as this has no meaning unless it signify "that he put away their sin by the sacrifice of himself," so it follows that the atonement for all is confessedly as complete as it could possibly be. It *must* be so too, or no "obstruction" whatever is yet removed. And since it is so, I would like to be able to understand in what way it can, of itself, or in what way Christ in making it, could have a more close relation to one portion of mankind than another? I can understand how, in the matter of sovereign application, he did no doubt resolve to come into a very different relation to his own chosen people, and to take suitable measures to render them willing to come to him. But it is surely a strange aberration of fancy to suppose that this purpose of application was built upon some *special vis* he was to put into the shedding of his blood for them, different from what he put in it for others. This represents it as either more than an atonement for the one party, or less than an atonement for the other. It ascribes moreover to this *extra vis* of expiatory efficiency, the function of somehow controlling or neutralizing the influence of the love and wisdom of the Godhead, and puts that efficiency, as it were, above the sway of the divine perfections, while, at the same time, it is certain that divine love provided the atoning sacrifice itself as the channel in which it was so gloriously to flow, and needed it for no other purpose. But if there was this extra energy imparted to the shedding of his blood for those who were to become his own people, and if it really required him to sustain this special relation to them, to render his death an efficient expiation for their sins, then there is no real expiation for the sins of any but his own people, and consequently, no "obstruction" whatever is removed, and no "opening of the door of mercy" is made for the rest of mankind. This is what the Committee cannot believe, for they tell us that "all legal obstructions" are so completely

removed, that "in consistency with his holy character, law, and government, God presents *to them all* salvation as a gift." Of course they mean, that the "presenting of salvation to all men as a gift," has nothing of that kind of hollowness in it which says as if "try your hand at taking! it is merely presented because it is known ye will not accept; for if ye did accept, you would find ye were persons who wanted the 'special relation,' and therefore your sins were not expiated." The Committee cannot mean this, and consequently they do mean and must mean, that the presentation of the gift *to all* proceeds on the shedding of the blood being *for all*; and consequently that a full propitiation has been made *for all*. And as there could not be more for those who were to become his chosen people, there was not and could not be, any special relation to them in the matter of making an atonement. None, surely, will suppose that the expiation becomes effectual *after* the person accepts, though it was not effectual *before*! None, surely, will doubt that its expiatory efficiency is antecedent to believing, and not consequent upon believing! None, surely, will suppose that the alleged "special relation" which Christ sustains to his own people, could be safely dispensed with in the case of any other person (say Felix) had he accepted the presented gift! And none, surely, will suppose that if the atonement, without this specialty would be enough for any one, there could be any good reason or necessity for putting the specialty into it (were the thing possible) in its propitiatory relation to a select number! The Committee, therefore, ought in consistency to abandon this idea, and rise into the just conception of the full efficiency of the atonement as a satisfaction for all men alike, and discern all specialties in the relations of Christ to his people, as descending from this glorious fact in the comely order of the purposes of application. They should do this the more readily that the texts they quote have no allusion whatever to the notion they are adduced to support. One of them speaks exclusively of the unique perfection of his one sacrifice, and the rest represent several aspects of his love and grace toward those who are already his saints.

It follows from this that the Committee ought not to believe, and cannot consistently maintain, that it is *the death of Christ* of itself "that infallibly secures all saving blessings to his people." To say this rhetorically when exalting the glory of this ineffable work, is a thing not to be blamed, but to plead for it as a commanding systematic principle, is at once erroneous and inconsistent with the Committee's admissions. The perfection of the atonement does not entail this self-produced saving energy, for it is allowed to have "removed all legal obstructions to the salvation of all men," while it is

also certain that, without being a perfect expiation of their sins, it could remove no "obstruction" whatever; and as the perfection of the atonement *for all* does not "secure saving blessings" *to all*, it cannot be its perfection *for some* that "secures saving blessings" *to these some*. The case is self-evident. The notion clearly ascribes to the death of Christ not only its glorious and transcendent functions as a perfect propitiation for sin, but also the whole consequences (on something like a principle of adhesion) which a God of love chooses to accomplish through its medium, and which Scripture and reason ascribe to that love which gave the Son. The Bible account of the matter uniformly runs thus:—"He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" It was from his love that he gave his Son, and it is the same love "that infallibly secures all saving blessings to his people," through the medium of his Son's atonement. The death of Christ, glorious as it is, is only one of the means by which the love of God "secures all saving blessings to his people," and this is not only true, but the opposite notion on the page of the Committee's statement disparages greatly the love and grace and wisdom of the Father, and the person and offices of the Holy Spirit, as it represents them as somehow bought or controlled by the price of the Son's blood, and not merely in their overflowing affluence finding vent for themselves through the expiation of the Cross. I regret that persons should have formed so low ideas of the grandeur and order of the whole august plan, as to be able to speak in such a style of the glorious subject.

As the Committee, in asserting the universal "removal of all legal obstructions to the salvation" of all men, must also hold the "putting away of their sins" by the sacrifice of Christ which were the only "obstructions," they ought to have understood their own minds better than to allow themselves to say, "*This relation of Christ to his people, and of his death to their salvation, was fixed in God's eternal purpose, and in the COVENANT OF GRACE BETWEEN THE FATHER AND THE SON.*" For if they refer to his "relation to his people," and the relation of "his death to their salvation," in the precise aspect of presenting the atoning sacrifice, their own principles should exclude this: and if they refer to "his relation" and the relation "of his death," resulting in application, the assertion has nothing to do with the subject they are discussing. Assuming that the former is their meaning, they ought to have known that as the atonement is an efficient expiation of sin,—of all sin,—and of all sin without exception, it is on this ground alone "that it has removed all legal obstructions to the salvation of all men," so that "in consistency with his

holy character, law, and government, God presents *to them all* salvation as a gift:" and that there could not therefore be, in the precise matter of expiation, any such special relation fixed in the purpose and covenant. They ought to have known too, that as the "kinsman Redeemer," in performing his "justice-satisfying and law-magnifying work," stood in "*an equal and undistinguished* relation to mankind sinners as such," and "repaired *the whole breach* of the covenant of works" for them all, the atonement must be a work equally real for all mankind, excluding that specialty of relation in it which they feign, in the eternal purpose and covenant. They should have known too, that as all Bible covenants proceed upon *the footing of a sacrifice*, so the atoning sacrifice must be considered as *antecedently* fixed, and contemplated as fixed, when the purpose and covenant respecting a chosen seed were entered into. From entering into this plain and scriptural and comely order, so far as known to us, they should have concluded, that as the "*general relations*"—for the purpose of "removing all legal obstructions to the salvation of all men," takes precedence of every purpose or covenant which advances upon this sure ground, so the election could not be first in order, and the atonement and the Spirit's influences resorted to as the means of carrying out the designs of the election; but the atoning sacrifice must have been first in order, and the election and the Spirit's influences fixed as the means of carrying into effect one important department of the design of the atonement. It had other high designs in the effects to result from it to the whole intelligent universe, and in the inexcusableness and fearful responsibility of those who shall disbelieve it; but election and the Spirit's influences were the high means of carrying out one important department. They ought to have known all this—it is no new discovery—and consequently ought to have known that "*the relation of Christ to his people, and of his death to their salvation, as fixed in God's eternal purpose, and in the covenant between the Father and the Son,*" presupposes the atonement for all, as the basis on which it proceeds, and is a gracious arrangement as to the application of its fruits. It is just a holy and wise arrangement after this sort:—"When thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand. He shall see of the travail of his soul, and he shall be satisfied." I cannot but hope that the Committee will take their principles yet by the right end, and cause the truth that is in them to exclude all their errors, and that they will come into these simple and clear views. For if the "*general relations*" of the atonement of Christ have "removed all legal obstructions to the salvation" of all men,

and "opened the door of mercy to them;" and if all this is done "in consistency with the holy character, law, and government of God," and all because by it Christ "has repaired the whole breach of the covenant of works, for mankind sinners *as such*;" which can mean nothing else, if it be not a mere accumulation of equivocal and deceitful words, than that the atonement has effectually expiated the sins of all men, then the engagement of the Son of God to make an atonement has been according to those "*general relations*," and not in any "*special relation*" to those who were to be the subjects of its subsequent application; and the purpose and covenant must have proceeded upon the contemplation of this expiatory work.

It is quite manifest then, on the Committee's own principles, that the great expiatory work was for *all*; and that its sufficiency for all arises from it being an effectual propitiation alike for the sins of all. As they admit, and tell us the Secession Church has uniformly admitted, that the atonement has completed that which is just the equivalent of this,—"*removed all legal obstructions*,"—so it follows, that we must go to the sovereign purposes of God's love proceeding on the ground of the atonement, for all the specialties that exist in the plans and progress of the divine administrations. These specialties are not to be found in the great propitiation itself, but issue from a yet higher source, the sovereign wisdom and love of the Godhead venting through the propitiation. This view of the case, the very admissions of the Committee, were they to *think them out*, would constrain them to take. A perfect expiation for all must, *of itself*, just secure as much to one as to another. It secures this to every one that "God is love" to him,—that Christ has "borne his sins in his own body on the tree,"—that a perfect propitiation is made for sin,—and that God is willing to pass from all the requirements of his own holy law and pardon sin, if the sinner will own and believe the love of God *to him* and the work of Christ *for him*. This is much, and all this it secures to all. But still it is obvious it does not of itself secure the personal salvation of any one. The securing of *that* is a matter that clearly flows from another source,—the faith of the individual,—the Spirit's influences disposing the individual to believe,—and the election of grace to be the subject of these influences. These proceed from the highest source,—*sovereign love*—and as the atonement did not produce, or awaken, or augment, *this sovereign love*, or buy for us the favour of our heavenly Father and the divine person and operations of the Holy Spirit, but was itself the gift of that sovereign love which flows through it, so it is not the death of Christ that secures the salvation of any one, or rains down the influences of grace from on high.

It opened up the needed channel for these to flow in. I surely need not stop to prove this. It is a truth that shines conviction by its own light. Every devout soul must flee to it from the opposite view, as that view stands convicted of imputing to God the selling of his love and his grace and his Holy Spirit, for the price of his Son's blood! By distorting the truth, it fearfully disparages the wisdom and the love and the grace and the whole glory of the divine Godhead.

As this is certainly true, and as it is also certainly true that, even on the Committee's views, the atonement has secured all the benefits mentioned above to all men, they ought, in consistency, to have gone into the views of saving and assuring faith, against which they so fruitlessly labour. They most preposterously find fault with the *condensed* aspect, converging it as if to a *focal point*, in which the object of faith is presented. They either know not or choose to forget, that the views they combat aim at the conversion of the sinner,—a much more important gospel object than even the edifying of the saint,—and that for this purpose the more concentrated the object of faith is, provided it be true and palpable, the better and the wiser too. Labouring, however, under this mental aberration, they become capable of framing the following words:—"It evidently limits the truth which saving faith receives"! and again, "as tending to impair the confidence which the people of God are warranted to repose in the work of their Saviour." They ought to know, however, that the views in question refer to the means of making men enter in among "the people of God," and had no direct allusion to their future "comfort" after they become such: and again I tell them that for this purpose the more *condensed* the views or "*limited*," if they will, the better, provided they be only correct. Let the soul enter in by the proper porch—and "*Christ is the door*"—and the views of its faith will soon expand, and there will be no lack of "comfort." Why do they not understand these things, and consequently see that the appropriating belief that Christ died for me just as he died for others, is saving faith and must, from the nature of things, bring assurance? It is doubtless true that the atonement, while it was for all, notwithstanding, of itself, secures the salvation of no one. It is doubtless true that if, of itself, it had, by some specialty, secured the salvation of some, this would only have made the case worse, unless a man were to be insensibly dragged to salvation, as no man could have known whether or not that specialty was for him, and so his hunting after it must have nullified his faith. It is equally true that the knowledge of it as for all and yet securing the salvation of none, is not faith, and consequently never can bring assurance. That,

therefore, is quite true which the Committee say, "if he is sure on the testimony of God, that the atonement" (of itself) "does not secure saving blessings to any, his believing this must render him sure, that it" (of itself) does not secure saving blessings to himself." Unquestionably! and yet the Committee ought to have come round to the same views after all which they so zealously oppose. It is quite certain, that whilst a man is thus acting the supervisor over the scheme, and estimating and gauging its magnitude, and the complexity of its parts, he is not believing at all, and cannot come to assurance. "The atonement was made for all men, and yet of itself it secures the salvation of no man," and while the man sees these statements to be revealed truth, and occupies his attention with them, he sees or may see, that he is not exercising faith as a believer in Christ, and, of course, he cannot say whether or not saving blessings are secured to him, because the truths he is beholding do in this aspect bring saving blessings to no man. But the Committee surely know there is another very different position of the soul than that of a mere system-gauger. Let a man come to feel deeply and anxiously his need of salvation, and he will soon transfer himself from the attitude of a proud examiner to that of an humble inquirer, and of course will soon alter his method of looking at the great and glorious subject. He will cease to be a supervisor, and seek to become a "consumer." What will he then do? He will not abjure any of his previous views, but will begin to appropriate the message, that Christ "came into the world to save sinners" and was "made sin" for them, to himself; and listening to the voice of love from his heavenly Father's lips, he will say, Was not then the love that gave the Son love for me?—was not the "child born" a "son given" to me?—was not his death the expiation of my sins?—are not Christ and eternal life the gifts of God to me?—Yes, responds his soul! Can I ever get more for peace and salvation than Christ as my own? No; never! Have I not got that? Yes; but I never knew it and believed it till now!! My soul was acting the supervisor, engaged in gauging and computing the general stock of grace! but now I discern it to be as precisely for me as if it had been *only* for me! Christ is mine, and eternal life is mine! God, I see, "presents to *me* salvation as a gift,"—this gift is "to be accepted by faith,"—faith is the appropriating belief of the testimony which "presents the gift,"—now I believe in the testimony as spoken to me, and Christ is mine, and eternal life is mine, and I am saved! Thus the consumer acts very differently from the supervisor, and he becomes a consumer by appropriatingly discerning the precise relations the work bears *to himself*, while the other is merely comput-

ing the multitudinous relations which it has to the species around him. Formerly, the man was like an Israelite whom we may suppose to have strayed from the camp, at the time when the brazen serpent was set up, and the proclamation made, that every stung Israelite should look to it and he would live; and who, on his way back, had got some general notions on the subject. When, in this half-informed state of mind, he surveyed the brazen serpent from some adjoining eminence, he would naturally thus philosophize:—"It is intended for all, they say, yet of itself it secures the healing of none,—it has '*general relations*,' but it '*sustains no special relation*,'—there must be something 'illusory' here!—none can be saved by it, if it does not *of itself* secure the healing of those who are bitten." This is a fair exponent of the meagre approach to the truth of the case that the Committee have made. But let the supervising Israelite only come into the camp, and there feel that he is bitten of a serpent, and is in imminent danger, and then he comes to learn another lesson. He discovers that the message of God conveyed in the general proclamation was intended for himself,—is addressed precisely to him,—and that the serpent of brass was erected for him. In other words, he appropriates the message as designed by God to tell him, "here is a salvation for you,"—and he looks and is healed. This latter and practical part of the matter, the Committee most unaccountably overlook, and therefore they have failed to understand that the very sight of faith or belief in Jesus, against which they so anxiously struggle, is just the discerning that, "as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up; that whosoever believeth in him" (believeth that Christ was lifted for himself) "might not perish, but have everlasting life." It is marvellous how their minds fail to reach this view, as there can be no other method of believing, and as their own principles, that the atonement "removed all legal obstructions to the salvation of all men," and, of course, expiated the sins of all men, lay open the way to every man now imitating the stung Israelite, and apprehending the crucified Saviour as the gift of God for his own healing. No man can get more than Christ for his salvation: and as the Committee admit that "salvation is preached as a free gift of God to all men," which is the same thing with Christ and eternal life in him being made a gift by God to all men, it is obviously a man's crime if he does not believe that the gift is made to him; and as they will not doubt this, will they be pleased to tell how a man can know and believe, and know and believe too upon the certainty of God's word, that Christ and eternal life are given to him, and yet want assurance? How is it possible for a man to know, that God has given him Christ

and eternal life, and to know it because he sees God telling it, and yet be in doubt as to his state? I would wish to be able to understand how the truth can be known to be true, and yet doubted! Nothing can be surer evidence than God's testimony. That testimony surely does tell every reader whether or not Christ and eternal life be the gift of God to *him*. And if he sees it there, and knows and believes that it is true, I would wish to be able to understand how this knowledge and doubt can co-exist in the same mind at the same time? The Committee ought either to have expounded this riddle, or turned round and learned and supported the doctrine that they so inconsiderately impugn.

It can hardly be misunderstood, I think, that a person comes to this faith and assurance by the rational method of clearly learning that Christ is testified in the Bible to be the gift of God to him, and that the great expiatory work in which "he put away sin by the sacrifice of himself," was a work for him, and does not come to it by any penetration into the secret intentions of God. Yet the Committee are men capable of going on to say, as if there were some cause for what they say in the doctrines they attempt to refute;—"the warrant of faith, therefore, rests in no degree on the knowledge which the sinner has of God's secret purpose in regard to his salvation, which he cannot by any means know, and into which it would be no less presumptuous than futile for him to inquire, while he remains in unbelief. Nor does it arise in any degree from any knowledge of the intention of the Saviour in dying to secure his personal salvation, which is not the matter of the gospel testimony, and which, like the purpose of God respecting his individual salvation, cannot be known while he continues an unbeliever." It is difficult to speak of this as it deserves. It would be painful to propose the alternative to *such* men of being either ignorant blunderers, or insidious slanderers. I will not allow myself to do it. But one thing I will say, that no honest and competent reader or hearer can discover the shadow of a ground for uttering such a couple of truisms, in all the doctrines that were under the review of the Committee. Nothing surely but ignorance can ever make any one attempt to affix such views as those condemned in the pair of truisms, to the individual in question. Why do men presume to answer things that they do not understand? or if they do understand them, why go about to misrepresent them? Is it fair—is it manly—is it christian to do so?

Still keeping in view what we have seen that the Committee do teach us, the unlimited expiation of sin by the death of Christ, as this is the grand radix that gives birth and shape to all the views immediately connected with

christian faith and practice, we proceed now to remark, that they ought to have been prepared to admit that man possesses the power of knowing and believing the saving truth, or, which is the same thing, putting away his unbelief. Had they still clung to the dogma that the atonement was made only for the elect, and that the "breach of the covenant of works was repaired" for them alone; then, as in that case no man could know from the Bible that Christ was the gift of God to him and died for his sins, in his struggles to appropriate Christ he would be necessitated to summon up a complex movement of the whole soul and urge forward all his feelings, in the hope that the process might eventuate ultimately in true faith. Under this view of things, and in the midst of so violent collutations of soul, he could form little idea, as to what faith is, or how it might come round to be experienced; and as a man can never reasonably suppose that he has power to do a thing the nature of which he does not know, he might seriously and conscientiously imagine that God had not given him the power to believe. On this point, accordingly, the thorough-bred limitarian really requires and deserves great compassion. But when a man passes from this into the "*general relations*," as we have seen the Committee have done, and thus comes to see that Christ was given to expiate *his* sins, and that Christ and eternal life in him are testified to be God's gift to himself, I see not how he could help knowing that he possessed the power to understand the saving truth, and, of course, to believe what he knows to be true. Now that the truth is presented to him in the plainest words of a plain testimony, I do not see how he could imagine that he had not the ability to know it, and to believe what he does know. He might, indeed, be very much disinclined to hazard his soul on so plain a truth,—it might look like "foolishness" to him as to the Greeks in the time of Paul,—and he might accordingly set himself to go round and seek to come at it by some other more laborious and circuitous and seemingly more secure and dexterous way, and thus keep himself back from discovering the Beloved, and believing the record; but still, that he is naturally unable to know and believe the truth, in the plain gospel form of its statement, is a thing which nothing except the most inveterate prejudice could ever make a man suppose. Hence it is very obvious—painfully and lamentably obvious—that it is a change in the disposition of the heart, and not in the powers of the mind, that is needed in order to induce the man to venture his soul on the finished work, and "submit himself to the righteousness that is of God." Plain it is, that for this purpose he does not need an accession of power, but a change of disposition! What could be plainer? And

hence, every experienced believer knows that he got no new powers—no new stretch of mental faculties—in the day of his conversion, but a very sensible change of heart, and thus a new use of his previous powers in virtue of the heart's change to an inclination to employ them for Christ. As all this, so soon as the mind is extricated from the limitarian nostrum, stands forth at once before the mind as the undoubted doctrine of Scripture and the form of christian experience and the dictate of common sense, the Committee ought to have been prepared to enter cordially into it, and to see that, instead of men needing new abilities to believe the record of the gospel, nothing but the inveterate enmity of the heart could render it possible for a sinner, with a Bible in his hand, to remain an unbeliever and unsaved, even for a moment. Of all truths, the gospel record is the plainest. Of all truths, it is the easiest to believe. And it is the enmity of the heart alone that renders it possible to disbelieve it. The Committee should have known this, even on their own principles, and they should have seen that the thing needed was not additional power, but a change of will.

It is needless to follow them into the small irrelevant statements they have made, to obscure if not set aside the simple and certain truth. What has it to do with the question in hand to tell us "that the natural powers of men are dependent for their existence and exercise on the Great Creator"? Everybody knows this. But the question before us is not how we came to have them, but merely what are they capable of doing? What do they precisely mean when they say, "the fall has impaired all the faculties of the human mind"? Suppose this to be true, the question still remains, whether the more decidedly intellectual powers (those which are occupied in knowing and believing truth) were impaired *directly* or *indirectly*? in other words, whether these underwent a direct stunt by the eating of the forbidden fruit, or so fell under the influence of depraved dispositions and unbridled passions, as that, without being any way directly stunted by sin, they had all their pristine energy turned in a sinful direction to subserve the corruptions of the heart? We wish the Committee to explain this and furnish their proof. As this *indirect* impairing (if impairing it can truly be called) is enough to explain all the phenomena of depravity, and is, indeed, the only principle that can explain it, if the Committee still cling to the other alternative, let them produce the proof of a direct curtailment of power, and if they cannot do this, they must surely follow the example of all rational men, and not believe in an unnecessary hypothesis without proof, and come on to the plain truth that the evil lies in the *heart*, and not in the *head*. At all events, we know that the change in

conversion is in the dispositions of the heart, and not in the powers of the understanding. Why tell us that "the understanding and the affections exercise a mutual influence; the prejudices and errors of the understanding swaying the affections, and the evil affections of the soul blinding and perverting the understanding"? I wonder what these "prejudices of the understanding" are! They are some genus by themselves, which till now have escaped the notice both of nature and philosophy! The *prejudices of the heart* often dupe the understanding, as the prejudices of the Committee against the doctrine that a man is able to believe a plain truth on God's authority, have seemingly duped their understandings into the notions they have penned. Still it is true that no sort of men are more conscientiously honest than those who are the dupes of prejudice in their opinions. Prejudices never arise from the understanding, but from the heart; and it cannot possibly be otherwise. Why go on to tell us, with oracular air, "that the influences of the Holy Spirit are needed on all the faculties of the human mind alike," without explaining to us whether they all need this influence alike in point of degree, or alike in point of directness of communication? Do they mean that the Spirit's influences give the man an enlargement to the faculties of understanding, and reasoning, and abstracting, and imagining, and remembering, and the like, to repair the direct stunting they underwent at the fall? Is this their philosophy of the case, and that every convert gets this before he becomes a believer, and that, of course, all believers are conscious of a hoist upwards and outwards of all their intellectual abilities? If they mean this, though the measure of enlargement should not be very great, yet how many converted persons would this test leave in their congregations? I know of no man getting nearer to a Newton or a Bacon by becoming a saint. If they do not mean this, (and they cannot possibly mean *any thing of the kind*,) do they merely mean to say after all, that when the light of the blessed Spirit's holy saving truth becomes shed on the understanding, and is truly apprehended and believed there, its own native heavenly power so changes the heart, as that the renewed heart disposes the man to exercise his thinking powers in a more obedient and dutiful way? Though there is alike the need of the Spirit's influences on all the powers of the mind, is it in this indirect way, according to the constitution of our nature, that it comes to sway the thinking powers themselves? If they merely mean this, as other good and wise men generally do, then their own statement leaves the question of man's natural ability where it found it, and this is found to resolve itself into a question of the moral order appointed

by God in subduing and changing the soul of man. I feel almost certain that, on second thoughts, they will not be able to differ from the judgment of the individual they seem so anxious to discredit—that the Spirit's influences are needed *directly* on the heart alone, (and they are needed and do operate there,) and that the thinking powers are only influenced *indirectly*, and are really good enough if the hostility of the heart did not dispose the sinner to make a bad use of them.

I wondered much at the texts quoted on this subject, of which this is a fair specimen—"Without me ye can do nothing." In much of the reasoning, and in such texts, they really speak as if they supposed that the party they write against held the opinion, that sinners could save themselves, and saints could sanctify themselves. This cannot be "a prejudice of the understanding" with them, as nothing that that party is known to have ever written or spoken, gives the slightest colour of pretext for such a notion. Nothing of the kind exists in all his publications. There we are taught clearly that Christ alone can save a sinner; and that Christ alone, that is, by his word and Spirit, can sanctify a believer. That breathes in every page. He teaches clearly, that no sinner by the most strenuous direct efforts of his soul, to remove what is evil in him and acquire what is good, can "either convert himself, or prepare himself thereunto." And he clearly holds, that no believer, even by the most intense inward struggles and strivings, can promote his own sanctification and set forward Christ's work. I believe he goes farther in this way than any of the Committee. He certainly holds, that, in justification and sanctification both, Christ's words are *felt* to be true—"without me ye can do nothing." Still, though the man can neither justify nor sanctify himself, he could, were he not disinclined to it, believe the truth, and the truth believed would both justify and sanctify him. It is by the truth that every thing is done. By the truth the sinner is saved—"Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free;" by the truth the believer is sanctified—"Sanctify them through thy truth; thy word is the truth." I do not exclude the divine agency, but it is with the truth *we* have to do, and by the truth all is done. Now, though no man "can convert himself, or prepare himself thereunto," by any direct efforts he can employ to change his nature, yet every sane man has the power to understand and believe the truth, and the truth will convert him. He, to be sure, till he is brought under soul-concern, is not at all disposed *so* to use his powers, but still he has them, and the *power* to use them; and when the Spirit brings him to soul-concern, and disposes him to use them in the receiving of the truth, they

are just the powers that he previously had, which he now so uses. This rational, and scriptural, and common sense view of the case, which, I will venture to say, corresponds with the experience of every truly converted soul, very clearly does not make void the constant dependence on Christ. The sinner could do nothing toward saving himself, if he had not Christ testified to be given to him in the Word which he understands and believes, and he now sees it is Christ alone and not his faith even, that saves him. And after he is a believer he needs to go to Christ at every subsequent stage of sanctification and duty, and "without him can do nothing," and yet it is true he possesses the power of knowing and believing what Christ is to him and has done for him, and could use it perfectly if he had only a perfect disposition of heart. While this view of the case accords with Scripture, and experience and common sense, it has this high additional recommendation, that it tends powerfully to convict and humble the sinner, and to exalt and magnify the grace of God. These are very obviously its attributes. When the sinner is made to see that he is remaining in unbelief in spite of the adequate powers God has given him to believe the truth of the gospel-record and serve the God of grace, when he sees that he has all along been criminally disinclined to use them toward their proper objects, he feels that he "has no cloak for his sins," and he is laid prostrate at once, and made to cry out, "What must I do to be saved?" When he sees that, amid all his mad career, God in Christ has still been his friend and even now is holding out the golden sceptre of mercy to him, he gives God the glory, and angels give it too, not of lifting up a pitiable and helpless imbecile, but of subduing to himself and graciously pardoning a vigorous and determined enemy. The full truth of man's entire natural ability to believe the gospel and obey the law, tends vehemently to convict the sinner before conversion, and doubly humbles him after it, and exalts the grace of God. It sinks the criminal and magnifies the Saviour, a thousand-fold more than the notion of the Divine Being most condescendingly stooping down to help creatures in a state of pitiable imbecility. What then could move the Committee, after a complete failure in the attempt to prove that man has no power to believe the truth, to pen those words?—"The contrary doctrine is, therefore, fallacious and dangerous; concealing from the sinner his own utter weakness, in place of humbling him under a sense of it; and leading to attempt those impossible things, to secure his salvation, and to serve God in his own imaginary self-sufficiency; elating him with pride in place of emptying him of self, and laying him low in the sight of God; discouraging his entire reliance in the Lord Jesus for

strength, as well as for righteousness; and tempting him to assume that honour to himself which must be ascribed to the Saviour alone." What is to be said of this? One is tempted really to ask, do the writers really know anything of the matter? Are we to call it sheer ignorance, or must it rather be ascribed to attributes of the heart? A mind with half an eye, *if that half be open*, cannot but see that the point in question does not entail any one of these consequences.

Keeping in mind still that the Committee teach "*general relations*," in the perfect "removal of all legal obstructions to the salvation of all men," (which either means a perfect propitiation or nothing, for all men,) there can be no occasion for *them* embarking in the advocacy of unbelieving prayer. On the comparatively recent nostrum of the *wool-dyed electionists*, (a notion, moreover, engendered in the darkness of popery,) that there has been an atonement made for a select number only, there might be some apology for it, but none in the position assumed in the "Statement." A strictly limited atonement necessarily reduces persons under deep soul-concern to the exercise of prayer alone, as the testimony of propitiation speaks in their view only to the elect; but the "justice-satisfying, and love-magnifying work," which Christ is now admitted to have performed for "mankind sinners *as such*," brings the gift of Christ and eternal life to every sinner, and it, therefore, becomes him to believe that first, and not go to pray in the known attitude of "making God a liar." The Committee ought to have known this, and given it its full weight, and not have gone on uttering a mass of incoherencies, not one of which touches the core of the subject before them, in such things as these:—"The obligation to prayer as a duty, and the warrant for it as a privilege, are not restricted to believers, but extend to all men visited by the light of revelation." I go farther, and say, it is surely "the duty and privilege" of all men, whether "visited by the light of revelation" or not. The want of revelation will affect man's fitness for performing this "*duty*," or using this "*privilege*," but it neither extinguishes the "*duty*," nor cancels the "*privilege*." The man may indeed be ignorant, but the "*duty and privilege*" are not annulled. But do these writers not know that whenever men are "*visited by the light of revelation*," the question is not as to the fact of "the duty and the privilege," but as to the divinely appointed order of going about them. The question is whether God has appointed that a man ought to believe that he may be capable of praying, or pray that he may be capable of believing? This is the only question, and with merely these two texts before our eyes—"without faith it is impossible to please God;" and "how shall they call on him in whom they have not be-

lieved?"—it is passing strange that any such question should, at this time of day, be ever discussed. Again, when they say, "*that the obligation and privilege of prayer must not be suspended on the evidence we possess that we have saving faith,*" the thing is a mere truism, when we understand the plain truth that the "obligation and privilege" proceed both from God. It is he who binds us to do the duty, and also to embrace the privilege. Still it is a sheer begging of the question, when we come to inquire into the divinely appointed order of sinners coming to perform "the duty," and avail themselves of "the privilege." God enjoins both faith and prayer. Both are at once "duties and privileges." And why go on to beg the question, and thus set people to pray in unbelief, if God requires that they should always pray in faith? I am sure it is more easy to believe as God bids us, than to pray as God bids us. The question is not in any degree what the real believer may need to do—he should "pray without ceasing,"—but it is, what is the order as laid down by God, in which an unconverted sinner, who is yet really fit for doing no duty properly so called, is to begin to enter on the christian life? Is his first duty faith? or is his first duty prayer? It will not do to let loose the imagination on the subject, and fuse the two together. They are kept quite distinct in the Bible, and whether of the twain has the precedence? Purland must that mind be which can doubt what answer to return, and which does not discern at one glance the immensely precious practical importance of the principle involved. How does it shut up considerate souls "to the obedience of faith," instead of allowing their occasional concern to find an escape by the deceitful safety-valve of formal prayers? Of what use in the question is it to tell us, that "*while prayer is an eminent means of reviving and strengthening faith, it is probably often in prayer that true faith is first exercised?*" Why lug in its advantages to the believer as a screen for it in the case of the unbeliever, unless it be felt that on its own proper grounds the notion is so defenceless, that it is only under the shade of the benefits of prayer to the believer that a man can set his face to it? It is quite true that prayer is "an eminent means of reviving faith" where it exists, but what is that to the point concerning the order in which he who has not faith is to come to get it? I doubt not that faith has often "been first exercised," not only in prayer but in almost every position that a man may, with the approval of his conscience, be in; but will that prove that all these positions are the divinely appointed means of conversion? Just as little will the fact stated by the Committee. I think that, in the light of this fact, they might very profitably turn their attention to two things. The one is, that we may thank the

limitarian scheme for so locking up the gift of Christ from the anxious inquirer, as to impede conversions till the agony of the soul becomes so strong that the individual bursts through his system at the broad side, and on his knees grasps desperately at a gospel text, which, in his cool moments, his system persuaded him he had no right to. Not only is this the case, but his limitarian pastors would tell him, that though they see he has a right to the text *now*,—"he was made sin for me,"—yet they could not have said before that he had a right to it,—making the man's right to believe that *Christ is his* to depend on the state of his mind, and not on the testimony of God!! Yes! when we closely inspect the subject, it becomes certain, there never was a believer whom the rigid limitarian scheme accurately applied, would not divorce from the identical gospel text in which his soul had discovered the blessed fact, "the Saviour is my own." His feelings and his faith both, can give him no more right to believe that Christ is his in the gift of God, than every sinner has. The other thing is, that these prayers in which "true faith is often first exercised," are of a very different complexion from the current morning and evening speeches which go by the same name, on the bended knees of the easy-minded formalist. The truth of this shines by its own light. Let the formalist then get the agony of earnestness which was felt in the cases supposed, and then, on the principle of the "*general relations*" or universal expiation, he will find a ready and easy door to Christ and peace, and be sweetly prepared to pour out his soul in humble and wondering gratitude, instead of needing to burst asunder "the new ropes" of limitarianism by the agency of his blind struggles. But if he want this agony of earnestness, there are few things that will more effectually prevent its accumulation in him, than the twice-a-day utterance of formal and unbelieving speeches on his knees. That is a sluice by which incipient seriousness finds a soothing vent, and it dries away. The Committee say, "we would earnestly warn all against any doctrine which would lead men to look into themselves for a warrant to pray." I say so too. I would "warn all against any doctrine which would lead men to look into themselves for a *warrant*" to perform any duty whatever. But I "would earnestly warn all" to "look into themselves," and see whether or not they had complied with a call to an antecedent duty, before they proceeded to a consequent duty, which, in God's appointed order of things, it is impossible acceptably to perform without the other. A man should know he has faith before he eats the Lord's supper, as without it he will eat and drink "damnation to himself;" and a man should know he has faith before he prays, as without it he goes to

his knees to "make God a liar." One thing I suppose the Committee will not doubt. It is this: that though there were to be an immediate abandonment of all unbelieving prayer over the land, there would be no diminution of the religion of the country. There would be a considerable defalcation of specious appearances, but no abatement of true Christianity, no withdrawing of true and acceptable homage to God, and no impediment thrown in the way of conversions.

On the subject of "*repentance*," I shall imitate the Committee's brevity. While the views they are controverting represent repentance as a "change of mind" in order to receive the truth, they express themselves thus:—"While *change of mind* is unquestionably denoted by the words most commonly rendered *repent* and *repentance* in the gospels and other portions of the New Testament, it does not express change of opinion only, but a favourable change of the general character, a change of view in connection with a change of feeling and conduct: being nearly equal to the words, *be converted*, and *conversion*." But how "nearly equal"? The equality of "*repentance*" is so near to "*conversion*," that the writers cannot tell the difference, as it is next to nothing. Well then, be it remembered that the repentance with which these men are quarrelling, is *not* that godly sorrow for sin which is experienced in the believing state, but that change of mind, of whatever kind, that the soul undergoes antecedent to the believing state. Remembering this, there are three singularities very observable in this statement. *First*. That this "*repentance*" which is equivalent, or nearly so, to "*conversion*," is a dogma directly opposed to "the standards," for these teach that repentance is a part of sanctification, and, of course, that it comes after conversion. (See the Larger Catechism.) Sticklers for the traditions of the elders should not so flagrantly set the example of doing themselves what they censure in others. *Second*. Their notion of repentance ascribes to it an unwontedly large capacity. In their words, it is a perfect Aaron's rod, swallowing up other rods as big as itself. According to them, *repentance* includes these three things: *change of mind*, *faith*, and the *new birth*. It is of no consequence that, under the power of this potent repentance, a man has faith before he becomes a believer, but it is quite certain the Committee include all these three things in *their* repentance. All three are present in *conversion*. There can be no question about that. There are *change of mind*, and *faith*, and the *new birth*, in every case of *conversion*; and as this is as nearly as possible equivalent to *repentance*, it must include them all too. The Committee may take this consolation to themselves, that few men, and no Christians, will seek to pirate this discovery of theirs.

Third. They seem to have discovered a method of "bringing a clean thing out of an unclean." The Bible says, "the heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked; who can know it?" And it continues so till the saving truth enters the soul in the day of believing, and changes the heart so that the person "is begotten again by the word of God;" and yet *they* teach that there is some method of getting "a favourable change of character,"—"in connexion with a change of feeling and conduct," and all this prior to the regenerating truth getting into the mind by faith. Let it not be forgot that all this "favourable change" is said to take place in a state of unbelief. Till the saving truth gets into the mind, it is admitted by all other divines that there is nothing but sin in every soul of man. It may be sober sin, or flagrant sin—thoughtless sin, or serious sin—still it is nothing but sin, for "they that are in the flesh cannot please God." But *they* seem to have discovered a method of getting "a favourable change of general character, and of feeling and conduct," educed out of the mere workings of this un-mixed sinfulness! It is strange how extremes meet, or rather how, in fleeing from a lion, a bear meets us. They profess to believe that a man has no ability to know and believe what God tells him about Christ as being his, and yet they ascribe a power to the sinner "to bring a clean thing out of an unclean." In other words they hold, that the mere changing of corruptions in a yet unbelieving heart, will bring up (and of course in a spiritual sense) "a favourable change of general character, and of feeling and conduct." A "*change of mind*," under a serious conviction of error and sense of sin, may and must take place before faith, but a renovation of this kind is wholly impossible. There may be, even without faith, an external moralizing of the man, but that is a mere exchange of sins, and often places him farther from repentance than before.

Nothing of all that the Committee writes struck me with more amazement than the miserably bald and trifling manner in which they homologate the delirations, I was going to say, of the Kilmarnock Presbytery, that it is an error to say "Justification is not Pardon, but it is implied in Pardon." I marvel that they allowed the "talismannic something" to slip out of their fingers, when they stretched them forth to this! Even though this were inaccurate as a collocation of ideas, and it were true that Pardon implied Justification, and not Justification Pardon, yet I make bold to say that, after reading the discussion in which the passage occurs, no candid mind can seriously quarrel with it, as if it were a dangerous opinion. That is morally impossible. But it seems further unaccountable to me, that men, who by clear and conse-

cutive thinking have *digested* their views according to the Scriptures, should quarrel at all with so plain a truth. There are both pardon and justification; they are distinct, and yet inseparably connected; and what aspects of the divine administrations are indicated by them, is a very laudable and necessary inquiry. A judicious mind will not be satisfied with crudities and jarrings on the subject. It is surely very plain and very generally admitted, that God pardons in the character of a Father, and justifies in the character of a Judge. Christ is the righteousness of all who believe, and when a sinner becomes a believer, he comes to be, by the act of faith, under that perfect righteousness, and now God, in the character of a Judge, has no longer any thing to lay to his charge. He has taken the righteousness of Christ as his, and the demands of the Judge are satisfied. It is this recognition of the sinner as now, by faith, under the all-perfect righteousness of Christ, and the consequent treatment of him as if he were just, by God as the Lawgiver and Judge of all, that constitutes the sinner's justification. It is the owning that *in Christ* the law has nothing against him: and it necessarily passes from God as the Governor and Judge of all, and the vindicator of the majesty of his law, now honouring the righteousness of the Lord Jesus, in treating the believer as if he were personally a just man. It has a reference to the general aspects of his moral government. But pardon is a more comprehensive term, and applies to a different aspect of the great administrations. It goes on as often as the person sins and repents, even after he is justified; and at the time of conversion, while his justification has reference to the man's now cleared character in the eye of the law, his pardon has a reference to the paternal kindness of God to him addressed to his conscience, as one whose iniquities and sins his Father in heaven has passed by. The whole is seen to come through Christ, of course, and is by faith. In this very pardon which the believing soul realizes, it is certainly implied that God the Judge of all has sustained the righteousness of Christ as his own, and justified him from the condemnation of the law. The truth is equally solid, simple, and beautiful. Nothing can be more glorious and certain. And how the Committee should stumble upon quarrels with it, and attempt to lock up the human mind to the terminology (for there is no conflicting doctrine) of the Shorter Catechism on this subject, is to me so strange and so utterly unworthy, that it is melancholy to meet with it in the nineteenth century.

On the subject of *original sin*, I would seriously recommend to the Committee to re-consider their own opinions. They say justly, "It is presumptuous and dangerous first to form our notions of what it becomes God, in the exercise of

his righteousness and goodness, to do in the disposal of his creatures, and then venture to try him and his counsels by the standard of our own formation. How much more becoming in man to bow with all humility to the truth which his Maker has graciously revealed?" &c., &c. I would ask how much has God revealed of the views which they advance? He has told us, "by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned," and this is nearly the sum of all which, as system-makers, they have God's authority to say. The first sin, and death as its consequence, and the total depravity of human nature, are admitted on both sides. There are some diversities of opinion as to the extent to which the consequences of the first sin, especially in infants, do really go; as to the time of actual transgression commencing, and as to the prospects of the infant's soul when it departs in infancy. But what revealed statements can the Committee give for the lengths to which they carry their mere shapings of original sin and depravity? They talk as if everything they had said was specifically revealed, and as if those who shaped their ideas a little differently were guilty of "first forming their own notions of what it becomes God to do,—and then venturing to try him and his counsels by this standard of their own formation." Now all this is mere gratuitous assumption or ungenerous insinuation. Let them only take notice how much of this they are guilty of themselves, in order to find matter of crimination against another! For example, they say "that however much the state of the infant's mind is hidden from us, depravity is plainly affirmed in the Scriptures of the whole race, of infants as well as of adults." The passages which they quote must first get their gratuitous gloss before anybody can discern in them the proof of that precise metaphysical conception of the case, which they palm upon the Word of God. There is no question before us as to the necessity of the new birth, as to the depravity of the human race, and as to the sin in which children are conceived. But still there are two points held by them, which they have learned at least not from the Word of God. The first of these is, that infants are doomed to eternal misery on account of Adam's first sin. Where does God say so? And the second of these is, that God himself is the author and former of sin in every human being since the fall. They do not deny that every soul of every infant is created directly by the hand of God; and yet they assert that God makes it in a sinful and depraved form, fit only for eternal damnation. This may possibly be orthodox, but it would require proof to be believed by any person who has a just reverence for "the only Holy One." Let us at least have one passage of Scrip-

ture bearing that the Author of all holiness is perpetually producing the condensed embodiment of all moral evil in forming souls in a positively depraved and sinful state, before it be sagely held forth, as a "presumptuous forming of our notions of what it becomes God to do,—and a trying of him and his counsels by the standards of our own formation," to vary from their shapings, and all this in the air of a certain revelation assumed for all that they are pleased to state. I think a little more modesty and reconsideration of their notions, according to the Word of God, are very needful attributes to the Committee themselves, and after they cast the beam out of their own eye, they will see more clearly to pull the mote out of their brother's eye.

As to the affected wisdom, amounting to little more than solemn trifling, with which the statement closes, I have nothing to say. The things said seem to me all very good, supposing the views opposed to be as bad as they are; anxious men should believe them to be, but I honestly think, the cautions are more needed in the reading of the Committee's own statement, than in the reading of the views and publications on which they comment. I could hardly conceive of a more lame and unsatisfactory statement of any system, than that which the Committee has given. Among thinking persons it can please no party. A man must have no digested opinions at all who could be pleased with it. But my greatest fault with it is, its greatly injurious tendency. It never can be the means of leading a soul to the peace of the gospel, or of pointing a soul to the way in which peace can possibly be found. Indeed, were it falling into the hands of an anxious inquirer, he would be obliged to forget, or disregard, or decidedly disbelieve, almost all that it says, before he could possibly come to the faith of the gospel and the peace of believing. I have, under this deep-felt impression, done what I conceived to be a duty in "showing also mine opinion," and, having done this, I commit the cause to the management of Him who ruleth over all. "The Lord reigneth, let the earth be glad!"

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